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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

Column Editor: **Tom Gilson** (College of Charleston) <gilson@cofc.edu>

Welcome to the annual "Hurricane Issue" of *Against the Grain*. After the threat of another "Storm of the century" and its accompanying 16-hour evacuation nightmare, I am happy to report, Charleston is still on the map. And, on a more personal level, my office is still where I left it, and looks much the same. In other words, there are new reference books scattered all over the place crying to be reviewed. So here we go!

Within the past year, Kluwer Academic has released two new entries in their authoritative *Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences Series*. Both the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* (1999, 0-412-74050-8; \$480) and the *Encyclopedia of Geochemistry* (1999, 0-412-75500-9; \$480) are worthy, if expensive, additions to this quality series. Edited by **David E. Alexander** and **Rhodes W. Fairbridge**, the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* contains over 370 entries written by an international cast of 228 contributors. As befitting the topic, coverage is diverse but interrelated. Articles dealing with natural environments like beaches, wetlands, deserts and mountain areas are side by side with those dealing with processes like deforestation, photosynthesis, the greenhouse effect and the nitrogen cycle. Entries also cover natural hazards like earthquakes, floods, landslides and volcanoes as well as mediating efforts like dams and reservoirs, earthquake prediction, river regulation and land drainage. Broader, more inclusive topics like energy, pollution, ecology, and the conservation of

natural resources are also treated and, in fact, afforded the longest essays in the *Encyclopedia*. Obviously, this reference contains plenty of hard science, but it is also informed by an awareness of the human impact on the environment and the "need to restore balance and harmony." For example, there are a number of entries drawing on the social sciences like those on environmental ethics and aesthetics, ecotourism, zoning regulations, federal agencies and control, environmental policy and sustainable development. In addition, there are articles on select scientists and environmentalists. Those chosen for inclusion are a diverse lot and include **Aristotle**, **Francis of Assisi**, **Rachel Carson**, **Charles Darwin**, **Aldo Leopold**, and **Sir Peter Marham Scott** among others. Environmental science is such a multidisciplinary, broad-ranging subject that it is difficult to provide the coverage it deserves in one volume. However, in this case, the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* succeeds in being a comprehensive, scientific treatment that will be of considerable use to interested professionals and scientists, as well as scholars and students. Even libraries that have other one-volume works like Houghton Mifflin's *Encyclopedia of the Environment* (1994, 0395550416; \$49.95), Gale's *Environmental Encyclopedia* (1998, 081039314X; \$208) and McGraw Hill's *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* (1993, 0070513961; \$105) will want to consider this work.

The *Encyclopedia of Geochemistry* offers a similar comprehensive, science based approach but, in this case, to the evolving field of geochemistry. Some 200 contributors have written 345 articles that cover topics related to the use of chemistry to both "explore and understand the Earth from the most basic elementary levels," and "to comprehend the evolution of the planet and life on it." In the popular

mind, geochemistry is most often associated with its role in dating events in the Earth's history and articles on dating methods, geochronology and radioisotopes, the geologic time scale,

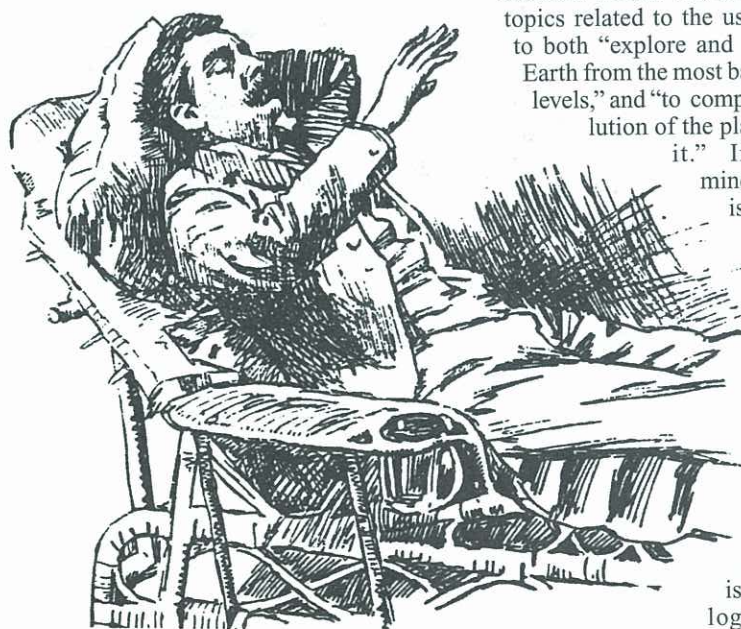
geochemical tectonics and radioactivity offer ample coverage of this area. In addition, there is great emphasis on individual elements and their geochemical groupings, the chemistry of the Earth's atmosphere, crust and oceans, various aspects of geochemical thermodynamics, and the organic geochemistry related to oil shale, coal, petroleum and natural gas. Because of the nature of its content, this encyclopedia seems even more laden with hard science than the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*. Special libraries and academic libraries with strong science collections will want to take a close look at this volume.

Both these encyclopedias are replete with helpful tables and charts, good bibliographies, and the strong use of cross-referencing. Each book has an author cited and subject index, but the *Encyclopedia of Geochemistry* has additional appendices listing chemical elements, the international system of units and a list of entries by subject. This last feature is one that any future volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* should consider adding.

The overall *Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences Series* is a substantial undertaking that Kluwer seems committed to. According to their Web page "previous volumes are being updated and new works published so that the volumes will continue to be essential reading for all professional earth scientists." Let's hope they hold to it. One also hopes that Kluwer will consider some form of updating via Web page access for this series. Scientific information is particularly vulnerable to dating and in a quick look at the bibliographies in both these volumes, I saw few references later than 1994. (And given the cost of these books, access to Web updates should come as part of the purchase price.)

On a much less technical and professional level is Gale's *World of Biology* edited by **Kimberly A. McGrath** (1999, 0787630446; \$85). Advertised as a reference providing "detailed information in Layperson's language," this book is appropriate for high school students and lower level undergraduates, as well as the general reader. In over 1000 articles this one-volume reference covers an impressive list of topics ranging from bacteria to the brain, genetic code to grasslands and steroids to sedimentation. There are also essays on important scientists and other individuals

continued on page 33



From the Reference Desk
from page 32

who have made major impacts on the field. *The World of Biology* is illustrated with approximately 350 images that serve to complement the text. Added features include a list of sources consulted, a historical chronology and a useful general index. Obviously not intended as an exhaustive study, this book offers well-written, understandable essays on major concepts and issues related to biology and its allied disciplines. The essays range from 200 to 1000 words in length and will be of particular use to those needing definitions and background information. Gale plans the *World of Biology* as the first of a series that will include volumes on chemistry, mathematics, physics and health. High school and public libraries will benefit most from the addition of this book.

Film librarians will welcome *Routledge's Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (1998, 0415151686; \$140). There is little else in the reference literature that covers Chinese film as comprehensively, especially in a single volume. The *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* is actually an encyclopedia of "three Chinas," the People's Republic, Taiwan and Hong Kong. This becomes immediately apparent in the introductory essays that cover the film history of each. Following these essays are the main entries of the encyclopedia listed alphabetically. For the most part, the articles are brief and clearly written, providing essential information. There are specific entries on themes and issues like censorship, the representation of women, nationalism, urban life and sexuality, as well as genres like musicals, children's film, documentary, melodrama and the action film. There are also articles on topics like criticism, film education and propaganda. However, the majority of entries deal with either film personalities like actors, actresses and directors or they provide synopses of individual films. Nonetheless, the reader is left with an impression of an encyclopedia with a well-balanced mix of articles. The book also includes a number of useful features like name, title and studio indexes, a classified contents list, a selective bibliography, and for the specialist, a glossary of Chinese characters with corresponding Pinyin and English versions of film titles and names. The volume is illustrated with 50 B&W photos. Editors **Yingjin Zhang** and **Zhiwei Xiao** deserve credit for a useful, thorough treatment of an important and interesting topic. Academic libraries and large public libraries will find this a valuable addition to their film reference collections.



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Another useful film reference, is McFarland's *Serials and Series: A World Filmography 1912-1956* by **Buck Rainey** (1999, 0786404493; \$95.) Many people are familiar with the film serials of the 1930's and 1940's. Television and showings in art movie houses have popularized serials like *Flash Gordon*, *Flying G-Men*, and the *Lone Ranger*. But this film genre has a long and more varied history. In his introduction, author **Buck Rainey** points out that serials and series have a history stretching back to the silent era with classics like *The Perils of Pauline*, the *Adventures of Kathlyn* and the very first serial, *What Happened to Mary* released in 1912. These initial serials usually offered a cliffhanger plot with a female protagonist, but soon they expanded to include westerns, science fiction and romance. Rainey also notes that serials and series were more than just American. French, Italian, German, Spanish and English filmmakers contributed to the genre. In this book, he covers 471 American serials and 100 American series, as well as 136 foreign serials and 37 foreign series. Arranged al-

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phabetically by title, each entry is numbered and gives the overall title, individual chapter titles, the release date, the actors and

continued on page 34

From the Reference Desk
from page 33

other principals, as well as, a brief synopsis. There is also a general index and a selective bibliography.

Serials and Series: A World Filmography 1912-1956 is both informative and fun to browse, being illustrated with black & white photos on nearly every page. This reference will appeal to casual readers as well as film buffs and film historians. Public libraries will definitely be interested, as will academic libraries.

Garland has added another impressive title to their **Military History of the United States** series. In **World War II in Europe: An Encyclopedia**, (1999, 0824070291; \$175) editor **David T. Zabecki** gives readers a thorough and accurate look at the European theatre of this century's most devastating war. It is a welcomed scholarly treatment coming on the heels of a renewed interest in the Second World War, as evidenced in recent bestsellers by authors as diverse as **Stephen Ambrose** and **Tom Brokaw**. The encyclopedia's organization gives an indication of its scope. The two volumes of **World War II in Europe** are divided into six broad sections including social and political issues; leaders and individuals, units and organizations; weapons and equipment; strategy and tactics; and battles, campaigns and operations. The articles within each section are arranged alphabetically and are informative and well-researched. However, with six different sections, readers will want to spend some time examining this reference to get a "lay of the land." In a sense the sections operate as a broad thematic index and, in fact, the final section on battles, campaigns and operations, has its own geographical and chronological index. But, essential to accessing the wealth of information in this set, is the use of both the general index and the index of military units and warships provided in the back of volume 2. While use of these indexes is generally satisfactory, there are a few problems. Looking for information on Romania's role in the war, I was perplexed to find no reference in the general index. Luckily, I checked in the index to military units and found a listing under Armies - Romania which led me to what I wanted to know. Also looking for

information on European Jewry, I was somewhat surprised to find nothing listed in the general index under Jews, but even more surprised that there was no cross reference from Jews to Holocaust, which is where the information can be found. In such instances the use of "see references" within the general index would help, especially given the complexity of this encyclopedia's content.

That being said, there are many features that enhance the value of **World War II in Europe**. Duplicate map sets of the strategic military operations are published in both volumes while the appendices include a chronology, tables of comparative military ranks, a glossary, Allied and Axis code names and a selected bibliography. Because of its more complex arrangement, gaining familiarity with this reference will require time and patience, but given the coverage, it is worth the effort. Students, scholars and lay readers interested in the Second World War in Europe will find this encyclopedia providing a rich lode of valuable information. One hopes that Garland plans a companion set (with an improved general index), possibly titled **World War II in the Pacific**.

ABC-CLIO has also published a two-volume set directed at those with interest in military history. Geared more to a popular audience, **American Military Leaders: From Colonial Times to the Present** (1999, 1576070018; \$150) contains 422 biographical sketches of military leaders throughout American history. Great generals like **Lee** and **Patton** stand beside incompetents like **Benjamin Lincoln** and fools like **George Custer**. Indian war chiefs like **Red Cloud** and **Cochise** are included along with frontier fighters like **Davy Crockett** and **Sam Dale**. And modern leaders like **Colin Powell** and **William Westmoreland** are af-

forded the same coverage as Revolutionary War patriots like **Francis Marion** and **Nathaniel Greene**. Interestingly, author **John Fredriksen**, extends the idea of military leadership to primarily non-combat roles. Explorers like **William Clark** and **Robert Byrd**, as well as women like Second World War aviator **Jackie Cochran** and Civil War nurse **Dorothea Dix** also make his list. The entries are arranged alphabeti-

cally and each has a brief but useful bibliography. The writing is direct and to the point, without being dry. Beside the alphabetical arrangement, a list of entries by military title, as well as a general index, help provide additional access.

Information on most of these people can be found in other sources but **American Military Leaders** offers a convenient and accessible reference focused on American military biography. High school and public libraries with interested readership will also find it deserving of attention.

The second edition of Bernan's **Handbook of North American Industry** (1999, 0-890591571; \$89) was published earlier this year and builds on the reputation of the first edition. Expanding on a winning formula, the second edition adds three new industry chapters in the Trade and Services section, the Overview; Education and Social Services; and Government. However, the main value of this reference is still in the focus on statistics related to **NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)** and its member nations. Government figures from the United States, Canada and Mexico are employed in visually attractive tables and charts that help the researcher analyze the economic impacts of the treaty. Over thirty industries are covered including agriculture, mining, construction as well as those in the manufacturing sector like apparel, electronic equipment, furniture, industrial machinery, lumber, paper, petroleum, rubber and textiles. The service sector is represented with coverage of business and professional services, health services, transportation, finance, wholesale and retail trade, education and social services and government services.

As with many of Bernan's publications much of the value is in the accumulation of existing statistics into a related and visually appealing package. But the **Handbook of North American Industry** adds a generous amount of explanatory text throughout that enlivens the statistics. All in all, the **Handbook of North American Industry** gives good value for the price. My only criticism is that there is far more information related to the United States than the other two countries. Of course, this is not surprising given the dominance of the American economy, but one hopes that future editions will beef up the coverage of Canada and Mexico. Regardless, both public and academic libraries will want to add it to their business reference collections, especially those that missed the first edition. 